



# Opioids and the Courts News: July 19, 2019

## National

### [Number of US Overdose Deaths Appears to Be Falling](#)

Associated Press

U.S. overdose deaths last year likely fell for the first time in nearly three decades, preliminary numbers suggest.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday posted data showing nearly 68,000 drug overdose deaths were reported last year. The number may go up as more investigations are completed, but the agency expects the tally will end up below 69,000.

...

The improvement was driven by a drop in deaths from heroin and prescription painkillers. Those falls were offset somewhat by continuing growth in deaths involving a different opioid, fentanyl, as well as other drugs such [as] cocaine and methamphetamines. Overdose deaths often involve more than one drug.

...

Valerie Hardcastle, a Northern Kentucky University administrator who oversees research and other work on local health issues, has seen the overdose epidemic play out in her region near Cincinnati. She believes a major factor is Narcan, a nasal spray version of naloxone, that has been widely distributed through the efforts of philanthropists and local, state, and federal officials.

“It’s fantastic that we have fewer deaths, don’t get me wrong,” she said. “But I’m not sure it’s an indication that the opioid problem per se is diminishing. It’s just that we have greater availability of the drugs that will keep us alive.”

## National

### [States Are Making Progress on Opioids. Now the Money That’s Helping Them May Dry Up](#)

New York Times

The [Missouri Network Outreach Center] exists thanks to \$3.3 billion in [opioid crisis grants](#), approved with strong bipartisan support, that the Trump administration and Congress have allotted to states since 2017, when a record 47,600 Americans [died from overdoses](#) involving opioids. The money for treatment, prevention, and recovery is the administration’s most tangible contribution to addressing the opioid epidemic, and a rare example of an initiative that has received almost full bipartisan support in Washington during President Trump’s tenure.



## Opioids and the Courts News: July 19, 2019

But even as Mr. Trump has started to claim victory over the epidemic, [citing “results that are unbelievable”](#) at a drug abuse summit in April, neither he nor his administration’s top health officials have talked publicly about extending the funding beyond next year, when it is scheduled to run out. Many in the addiction field fear that with opioid overdose deaths finally beginning to level off and other problems like high prescription drug costs emerging as campaign issues, the attention to treatment will dissipate.

### National

#### [Opioid death rates soared in communities where pain pills flowed](#)

Washington Post

Death rates from opioids soared in the towns, cities, and counties that were saturated with billions of prescription pain pills from 2006 through 2012, according to government death data and a previously undisclosed database of opioid shipments made public this week.

The highest per capita death rates nationwide from opioids during those years were in rural communities in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Virginia. In those seven years, those communities also were flooded with a disproportionate share of the 76 billion oxycodone and hydrocodone pain pills from some of the country’s largest drug companies, [an analysis by The Washington Post reveals](#).

### National

#### [As lawyers zero in on drug companies, a reckoning may be coming](#)

Washington Post

For two decades, [as 200,000 opioid overdose deaths piled up across America](#), there was always someone else to blame. Families blamed drug companies. Drug companies blamed doctors. Everyone blamed the government.

More than half the public continues to see drug addiction as a moral failing, blaming substance abusers themselves for the epidemic, at least in part, according to recent polling.

But now the effort to hold someone to account for the worst drug crisis in U.S. history is narrowing to a few dozen drug companies whose day in court has come or will soon arrive. Virtually every state and nearly 2,000 towns, cities, and counties have demanded those firms, which include some of America’s most trusted brands, be forced to pay up to help stop the epidemic.